The Importance of Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development for Student Achievement and Life Success

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What is Needed to be College, Career, Community, & Life Ready... in 2028?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqZiIO0YI7Y

We are preparing our students for an uncertain future! But one constant will be the importance of caring interpersonal relationships.

An anthropologist proposed a game to the kids in an African tribe. He put a basket full of fruit near a tree and told them that whoever got there first won the sweet fruits. When he gave them the signal to run they all took each other's hands and ran together, then sat in a circle enjoying their treats. When he asked them why they chose to run as a group when they could have had more fruit individually, one child spoke up and said: "UBUNTU, how can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?"

'UBUNTU' in the Xhosa culture means: "I am because we are"

A person is a person through other persons. –Bantu

What do we know with certainty?

- *To thrive in the 21st century, students need more than traditional academic learning. They must be adept at collaboration, communication and problem-solving, which are some of the skills developed through social and emotional learning (SEL). Coupled with mastery of traditional skills, social and emotional proficiency will equip students to succeed in the swiftly evolving digital economy.*

- Report of the World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 4

- https://www.weforum.org/reports/new-vision-for-education-fostering-social-and-emotional-learning-through-technology

We Set Our Sights on the Wrong Equity Goals

Preparation for College Completion"+" and Career Continuity

Ready, Willing, and Able– Savitz-Romer & Bouffard

"Simply passing the accountability assessment is not enough for them to navigate this complex world"
(Metz Elementary Principal)

Social-emotional and character competencies are as basic, foundational, and essential to academic achievement as reading competence

The Task is One of Ethical and Moral Responsibility and Educational Equity

It cannot be optional for children to be in a positive school climate and to systematically learn social-emotional competencies and character virtues essential for life, college, and career success. It must be guaranteed.

True educational equity requires full preparation for the tests of life, both academic and social-emotional, not mainly a life of tests.
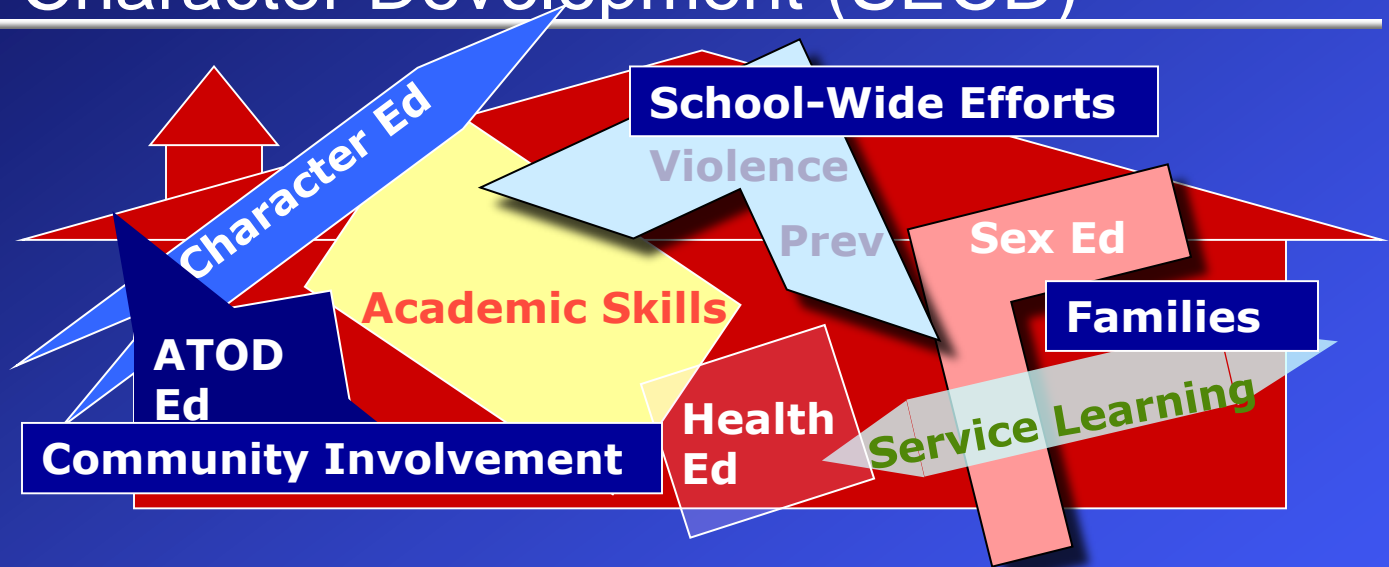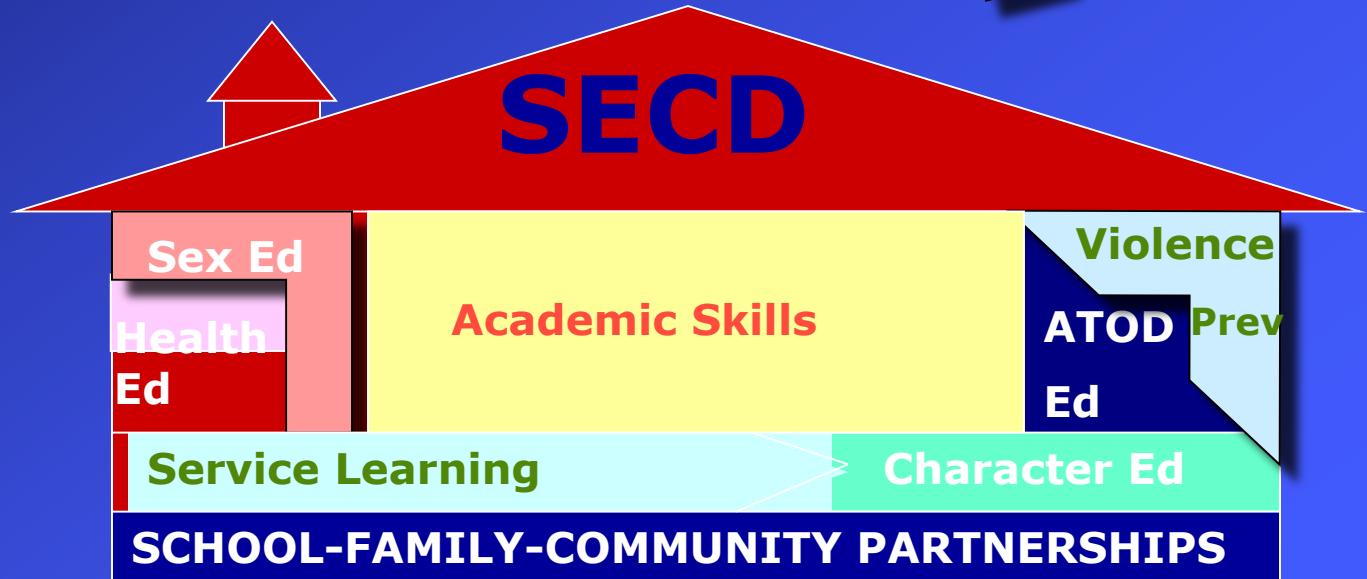
We Know How to Do This

- State and National Schools of Character, including many in New Jersey

- International Schools of Character

- Examples of best-practices models for SEL skill development

- Articulation of Principles for Culture of Health, Safety, Support, and Achievement in Schools

- Successful, Feasible, In-Practice Models for Ongoing Implementation Support

We must Turn our Jumbled Schoolhouses into Places that Synergistically Promote Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD)

A Jumbled and Fragmented Schoolhouse

Character Ed

School-Wide Efforts

Violence

Prev

Sex Ed

Academic Skills

Families

ATOD Ed

Health Ed

Service Learning

Community Involvement

A School of Social-Emotional & Character Competence

SECD

Sex Ed

Violence

Health Ed

Academic Skills

ATOD Ed

Prev

Service Learning

Character Ed

SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

How Students Can Truly Achieve:
Climate, Character, and SEL Competencies

True achievement in school and in life integrates the intellectual, emotional, and social facets of learning.   These are inextricably interconnected.
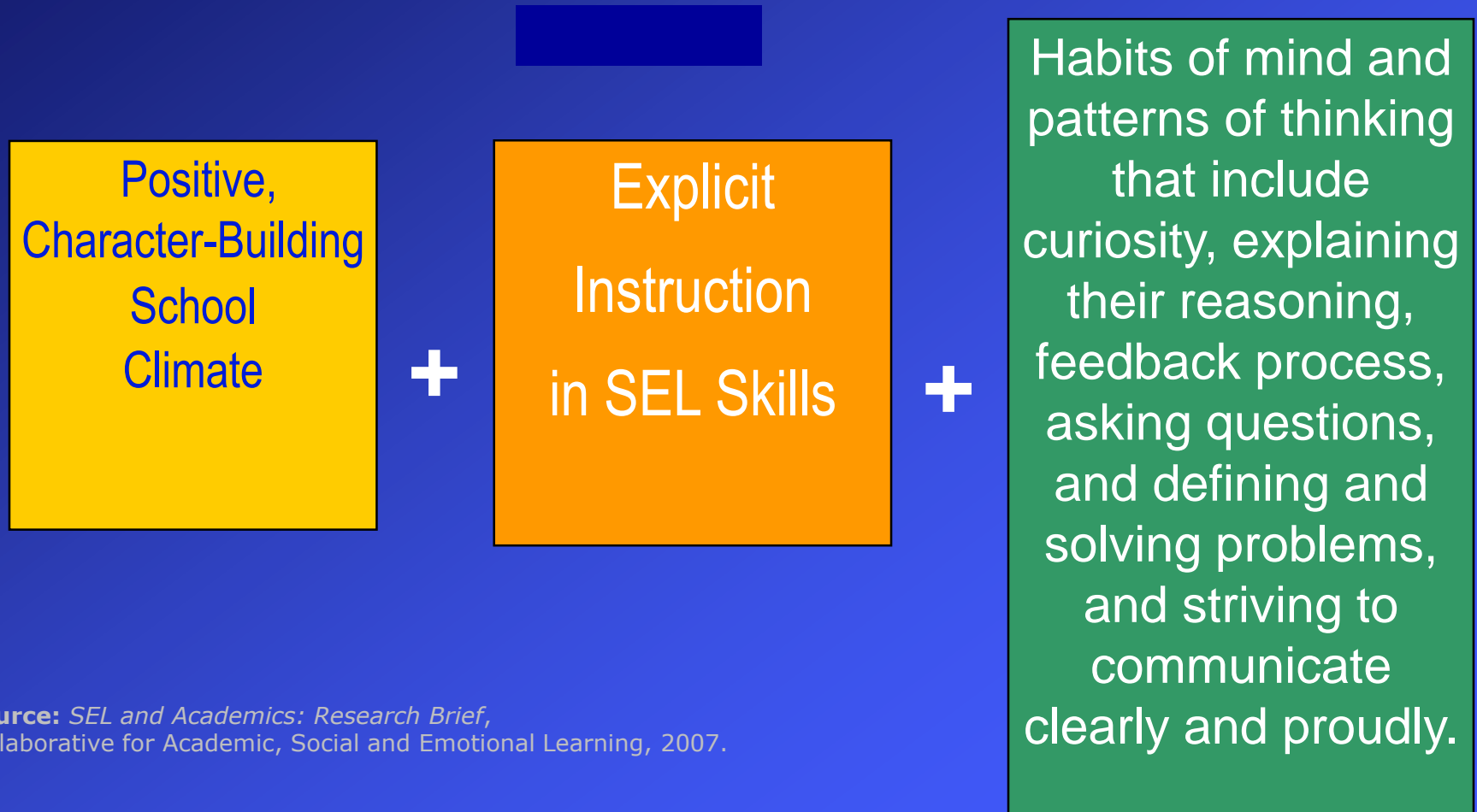
| Positive, Character-Building School Climate | **+** | Explicit Instruction in SEL Skills | **+** | Habits of mind and patterns of thinking that include curiosity, explaining their reasoning, feedback process, asking questions, and defining and solving problems, and striving to communicate clearly and proudly. |

Benefits of SECD

Good Science Links SECD to the Following Student Gains:

- Social-emotional skills
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- Positive classroom behavior
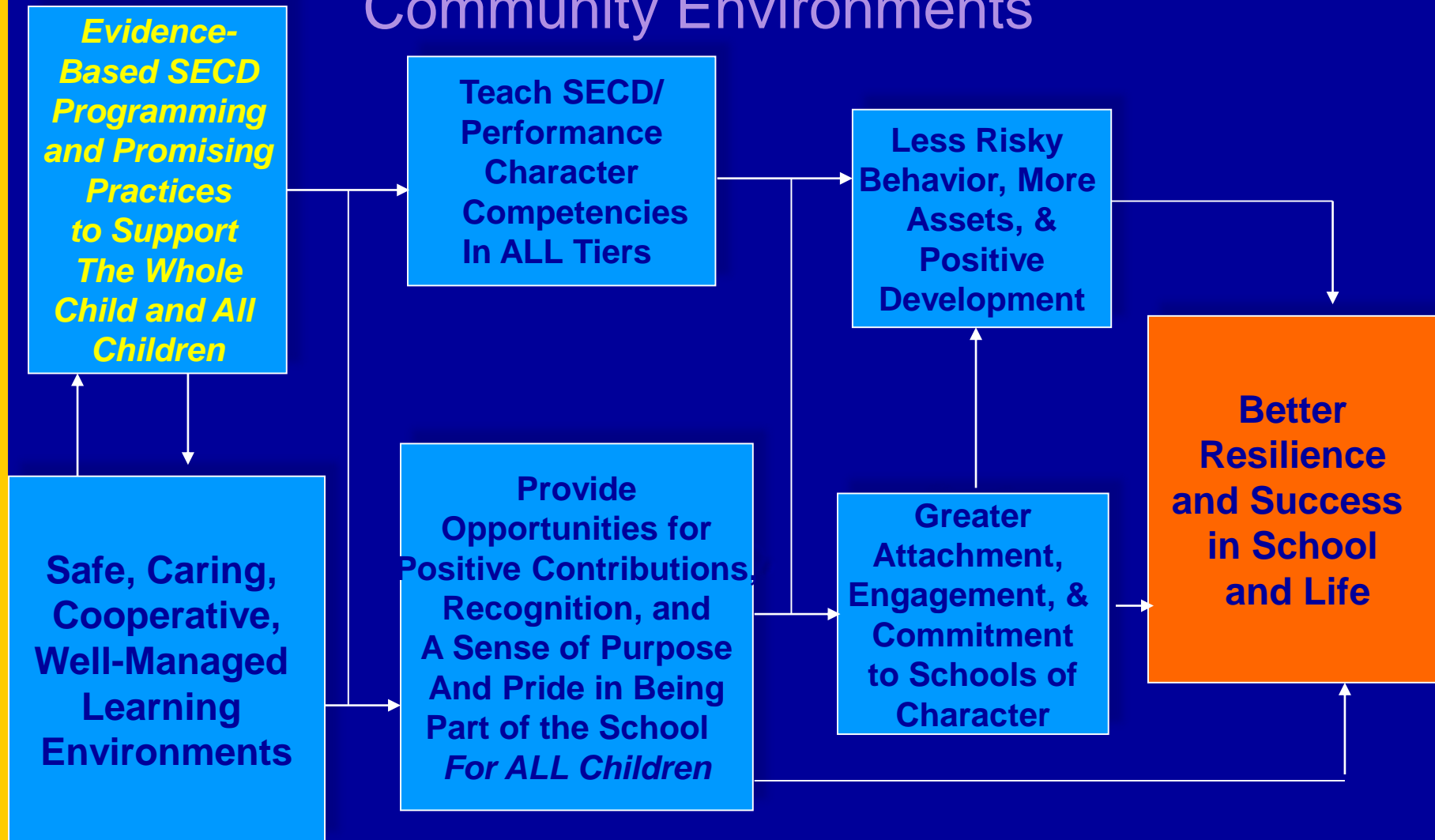- 10-11 percentile-point gains on standardized achievement tests

And Reduced Risks for Failure:

- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress

Source: Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development*. (available at www.casel.org) and M. Berkowitz & M. Bier, *What works in character education*. (Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership, 2006) (available at www.characterandcitizenship.org.)

Resilient Schools and Students Come from a Confluence of SECD and Supportive School and Community Environments

Evidence-Based SECD Programming and Promising Practices to Support The Whole Child and All Children

Teach SECD/ Performance Character Competencies In ALL Tiers

Less Risky Behavior, More Assets, & Positive Development

Safe, Caring, Cooperative, Well-Managed Learning Environments

Provide Opportunities for Positive Contributions, Recognition, and A Sense of Purpose And Pride in Being Part of the School *For ALL Children*

Greater Attachment, Engagement, & Commitment to Schools of Character

Better Resilience and Success in School and Life

Essential Features of SECD Programs

- A common language
- Flexibility with consistency
- Specific lessons focused on SECD
- Opportunities for integration across all subjects

NJSHACC Guidelines for Truly Achieving Schools
The Culture of a Learning Organization

- *INSPIRING…………………of one another*
- *CHALLENGING……………take risks to improve*
- *SUPPORTIVE…………….collective efficacy*
- *SAFE AND HEALTHY……others' keepers*
- *ENGAGED………………….collaborative norms*
- *RESPECTFUL……………...no-fear communication*
- *COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS…set and pursue goals for learning together*

- *See: http://selinschools.org/new-jersey-culture-and-climate-coalition/*

Successful 21st Century Schools Understand and Emphasize Know:

Systematic, comprehensive, and effective approaches to school-wide SECD are an essential component of all students' academic and life success

We must turn what seems Incredible into Inevitable and what seems Inconceivable into Achievable

Turn on the Learner's On-Switch

- Keeping the switch on in the face of inequities and other challenges that will be encountered requires students to have schools – and school leaders-- that actively, systematically, and continuously promote:

- their social-emotional and character **skills**,

- a positive **mindset** connected to a sense of **purpose**

- a **pedagogy that inspires** possibility and connection to attainable future **aspirations**, and

- nurturing and sustaining **relationships that are rainbows in students' clouds** and bathe students in the light of their own potential, not their failings.

Small Steps Toward a Great Journey:
How Shall We Proceed to Get to Where We Know We Must Go?

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